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Inter-agency initiative to attract and retain international expertise

Published 04 March 2024

The shortage of workers with sought-after skills is one of the main obstacles to growth for companies in Sweden and has also become an obstacle to regional development. In light of this, the Government is allocating SEK 25 million in 2024 to strengthen coordination of the ongoing efforts of eleven government agencies linked to attracting and retaining international expertise.

“Sweden must be a country that welcomes international expertise, and the prospects for attracting, establishing and retaining qualified labour must be strengthened. This is necessary so that Swedish companies can ensure their future competitiveness and growth,” says Minister for Energy, Business and Industry Ebba Busch.

There is currently no clear coordination of the government agencies’ different processes and efforts to attract and establish foreign labour, a fact that has been highlighted by business representatives, government agencies and regions in several contexts.

At the same time, many companies are facing challenges – partly due to the green and digital transition – that require strengthening the skills of existing employees. They also need to bring new expertise into their operations. This applies to Sweden as a whole and to northern Sweden in particular, where major business start-ups and expansions have led to major labour needs.

“We must encourage talented people to choose Sweden. This is vital if we are to have the expertise for the enormous transition that Swedish industry is now going through. Attracting international labour is also an important part of the Government’s new strategy for foreign trade. What’s more, the countries that can attract expertise will be the winners in the green and digital transition,” says Minister for International Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade Johan Forssell.

The Government has therefore instructed ten or so government agencies to work together to identify and address problems related to attracting, establishing and retaining highly qualified international expertise and other foreign labour that is important for Sweden’s competitiveness. The aim is to help make the relevant central government measures better coordinated, more predictable and better equipped to meet the needs of companies. This initiative also aims to ensure that workers who come to Sweden, including their accompanying families, quickly become part of the community so that they choose to establish themselves in the country. This also includes researchers and students.

In all, SEK 25 million has been allocated to this initiative for 2024. It is expected that SEK 30 million per year will be set aside for 2025 and 2026.

“For an engineering country like Sweden, it is important that highly qualified workers can continue to come here to work and contribute, not least in the green transition. This initiative is important to improve the opportunities for employers to recruit key foreign expertise which is so crucial for our competitiveness,” says Minister for Employment and Integration Johan Pehrson.

The proposal is based on an agreement between the Government and the Sweden Democrats.

The government agencies involved

The following government agencies and actors are involved in the initiative: Arbetsförmedlingen, Business Sweden, Försäkringskassan, the Swedish Migration Agency, Statistics Sweden, the Swedish Tax Agency, the National Government Service Centre, the Swedish Institute, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, the Swedish Council for Higher Education and Vinnova. The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth will coordinate the project.

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